

Characteristics of co-dependence among wives of persons with substance use disorder in Iran

ABSTRACT

Substance use disorder is known to adversely affect both the user as well as his or her family members. A consequence of chemical dependence on family members is co-dependence. Co-dependence is associated with an excessive focus on the needs and behaviors of the person with substance use disorder. Most studies in the field of drug-related problems in Iran have focused on the substance user, while few studies have been carried out on the family members. A qualitative case study approach was employed to explore characteristics of co-dependence among wives of persons with substance use disorder in Iran where substance use disorder is a notable social harm. Purposive snowball sampling technique was used to identify 11 Iranian wives of individuals with substance use disorder. The data were collected through in-depth, face-to-face interviews, non-participation observation, and document analysis. Data were analyzed using the constant comparative method. The analysis yielded five main characteristics of co-dependence among wives of persons with substance use disorder, namely: Denial, enabling behavior, low self-worth, enmeshed self, and weak spiritual relationship with God. The findings showed that except for a weak spiritual relationship with God, most of the characteristics of co-dependence among the participants were similar to the traits of co-dependents found in previous studies conducted outside Iran.

Keyword: Co-dependence; Wife of a person with substance use disorder; Substance use disorder; Qualitative case study